

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 41

**"An Act To Allow a Person 65 Years of Age or Older To Fish with Bait
in any Inland Water"**

SPONSORED BY: Representative LARRY DUNPHY of Embden

**CO-SPONSORED BY: Representative CRAY of Palmyra
Representative GIFFORD of Lincoln
Representative HARLOW of Portland
Representative KESCHL of Belgrade
Representative MALABY of Hancock
Representative McCLELLAN of Raymond
Representative NELSON of Falmouth
Representative TURNER of Burlington**

DATE OF HEARING: February 5, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Michael Brown, Fisheries Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking in opposition to **L.D. 41**

The Department remains committed to providing angling opportunities for all anglers including those over the age of 65. The Department issues a life-time fishing license to anglers age 65 and over for a one-time fee of \$50.00 and the Department's Boat Access Program continues to provide access sites to Maine's public waters. The state of Maine has more than 6,000 lakes and ponds and 32,000 miles of rivers and streams. The vast majority of these waters provide fishing opportunities where there are no gear or terminal tackle restrictions.

In 2011, the Department issued 36,935 fishing licenses to Maine residents 65 and over and an additional 10,018 fishing license to non-resident anglers in the same category. If L.D. 41 passes it will allow the use of live, dead, and preserved baits in waters where these baits are currently prohibited; impacting significant fisheries resources at times when these fish are most vulnerable.

In 2005, the legislature established protections for State Heritage Fish Waters (Title 12 §12461-copy attached) by prohibiting the use of live fish as bait in lakes and ponds containing native brook trout. The use of live bait in these waters will significantly increase the possibility of illegal fish introductions and if this should occur would inherently cause interspecific competition with native brook trout.

The changes proposed in this bill will increase mortality and injury to fish when and where these resources are most vulnerable. Current regulations, developed by the Department, through the rulemaking process which involves significant public input, seek to protect our most valuable fisheries while also continuing to provide opportunities for anglers. The Department implements these regulations to protect fish during stressful periods of the year, at spawning/staging areas, when fishing pressure is high or where unique fishery resources exist.

For example, landlocked salmon, lake trout, and brook trout waters identified as having natural reproduction and self-sustaining populations are important to all anglers. These are unique and valuable resources that require a high level of protection. Legislative changes that would permit distinct segments of the angling community to use fishing tackle which would increase mortality are inconsistent with our current management objectives for these fishery resources.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time.